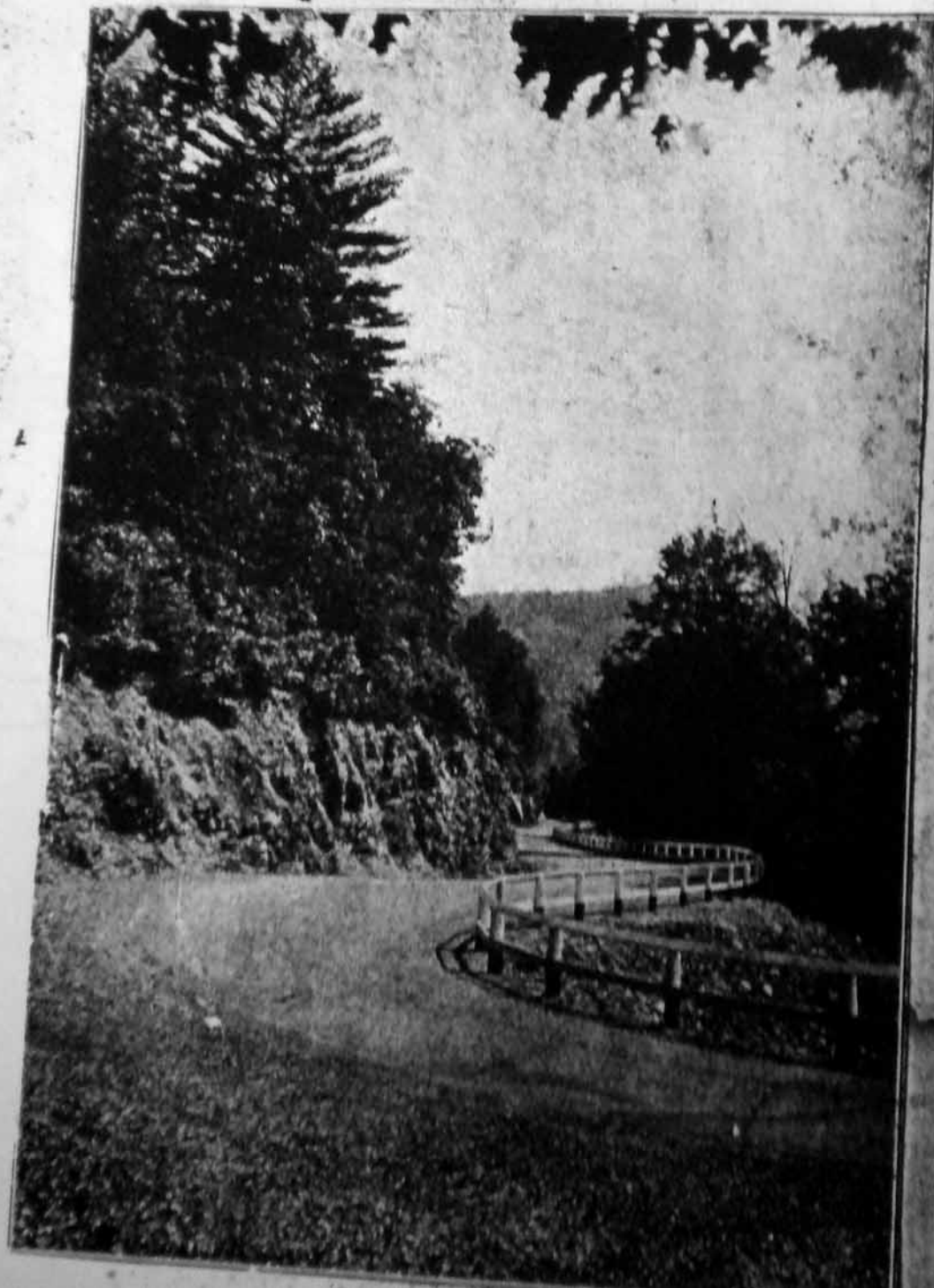
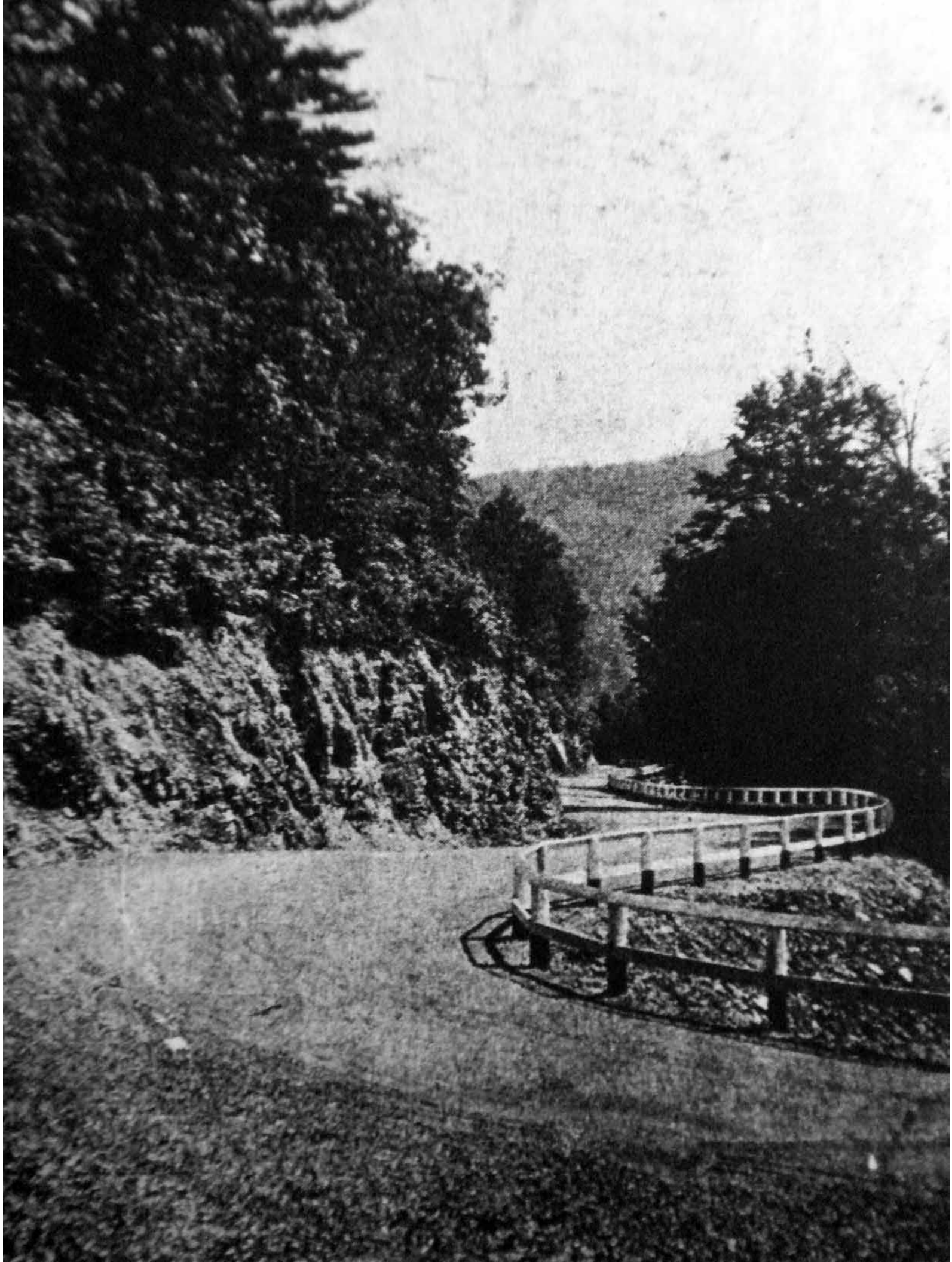
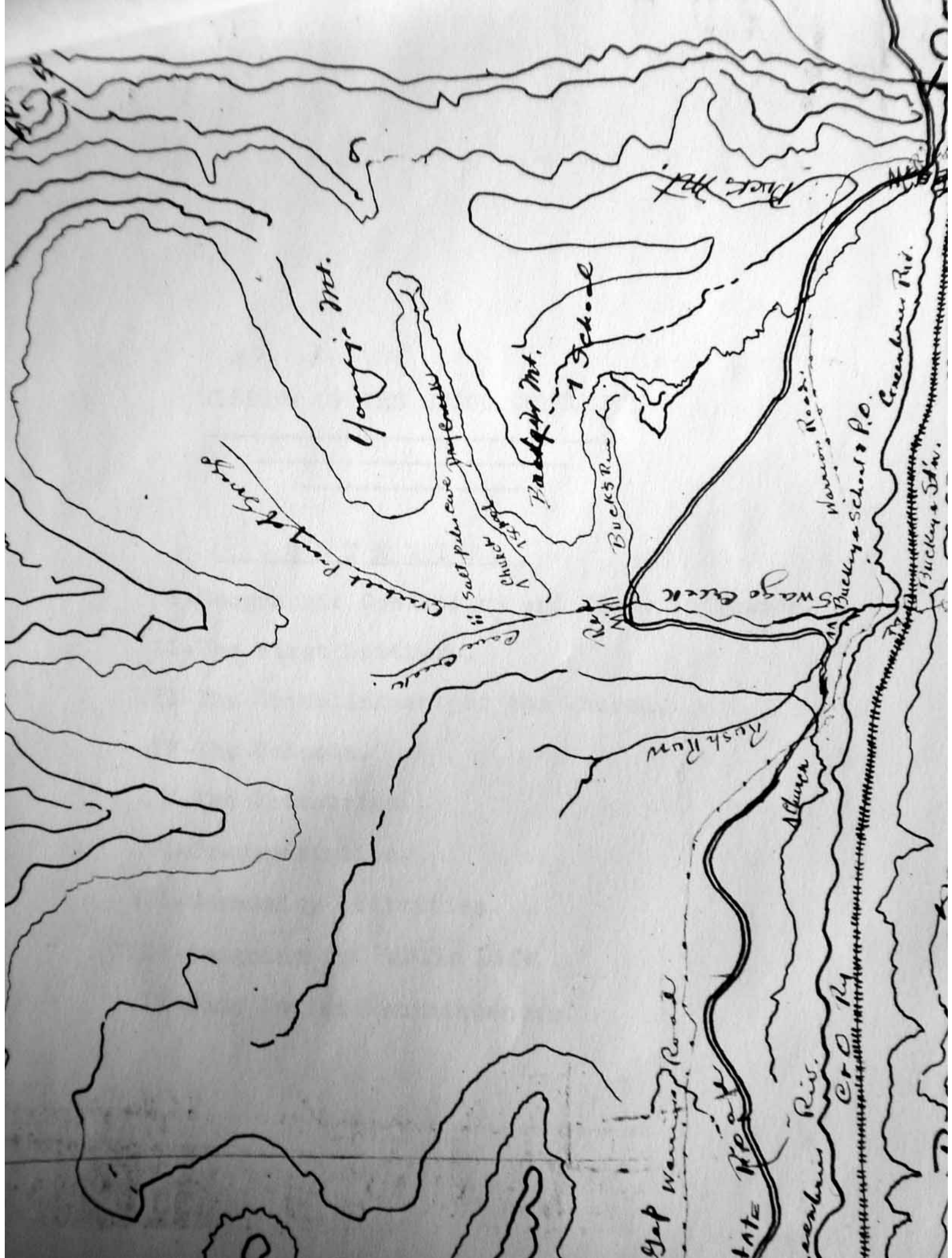


The  
Swago  
Community









# HISTORY OF THE SWAGO COMMUNITY

---

---

---

## C O N T E N T S

- I-Geographic Conditions and Their Influence.
- II-The First Settlers.
- III-The Establishment of the Church.
- IV-The Schools..
- V-The Industries.
- VI-Transportation.
- VII-Community Activities.
- VIII-Swagoians in Public Life.
- IX-Some Indian Reminiscences.

## HISTORY OF THE SWAGO COMMUNITY

Geographic Conditions and Their Influence.- The Swago Community lies within a natural bowl formed by lofty mountains. As may be seen on the sketch map, the Greenbrier river flows through the eastern edge of the bowl. Swago creek-the English abbreviation for the Indian Oswego-flows eastward through the bowl from the western mountains, to empty into the the Greenbrier. The level lands forming the bottom of the bowl have an average altitude of about 2300 feet, while some of the mountains marking the community boundaries upon the west reach a height of 4000 feet. The big lime traverses the section at an altitude of 2500 feet. In many places this ledge of limestone is five hundred feet in thickness. The most desirable farming section of the community is in the level lands immediately below this outcrop of limestone, and it was here that the first settlers naturally located.

Geographic conditions were also responsible for the location of the Indian trail which led the first settlers into the level lands near the mouth of Swago. At what is now known as the "Red Mill", Swago has a considerable fall, and it was here that the pioneers built the rude mill about which the community grew. *Later, a powder mill and a saw mill were erected to be driven by the power furnished by the waterfall.*

The First Settlers.-- Marlin and Sewell, the first white men to reach the Greenbrier, came to the mouth of Knapp's creek in 1749. The Lewis family made a survey and laid claim <sup>to</sup> the land about the present town of Marlinton in 1750. When the desirable land about Knapp's creek was taken, immigrants sought locations along the Indian trail to the southward. Thus it was that Joshua Buckley, who, with his wife and child, came from the vicinity of Winchester in 1769, proceeded southward until they came to the level land where the Seneca Trail, or "Warrior's Road", crossed Swago. Here the Buckleys found a hunter's camp already erected, and this camp became the first <sup>permanent</sup> home in the Swago community. The following year, 1770, Thomas McNeill established his home at the head of Rush Run, adjoining the Buckley survey. Later, Moses Moore, the noted pioneer, appears to have occupied the lands near the present Red Mill. As other settlers came, they made their homes on the mountain spurs which put down to the more level lands. Among these later settlers were the Ewings, Youngs, Kees, Adkisons, Auldridges, <sup>Rogers and Lightner</sup> ~~Lightners~~, and ~~Rogers~~ families.

The Establishment of the Church.-- The early settlers of the community were inclined to be religious. Tradition has it that the first minister to visit the community conducted services in a log barn near the Red Mill. For many years all religious services were held in the homes or in the barns. For many years a Sabbath School was conducted by Mrs. Sampson Mathews at her home now occupied by Withrow McClintic. Other religious services

were held at the home of Mrs. Phoebe McNeill at the Mill. Finally, when a schoolhouse was erected near the mouth of Dry Creek, this building was used as a church. It seems that a Methodist Protestant minister visited the community, and was refused permission to preach in the school building. By way of protest, the non-church people hastily erected a log structure on the Buckley land near the mouth of Swago. Thus the M.P. Church, which had not a single member in the neighborhood, came to own the first church built in the community. Later, the Methodist Episcopalians built a church near the mouth of Dry Creek.

The Schools. - As early as 1790, the sparsely settled community was supporting a short term "pay school" which was held in the log barn at the mill. Later, a school was conducted in the home of Jonathan McNeill, who had acquired the Mill Property. Just when the first school building was erected is unknown, but it is certain that such a building existed in 1820. It was located near the mouth of Dry Creek, and on the playground of the present Dry Creek school. Prior to the Civil War a number of short terms were taught in the "Log Church." These were all pay schools. At the close of the war, when the new State went about organizing a system of public education, Jonathan McNeill was chosen as the first county superintendent of schools, and John E. Adkison taught the first term of public school in the old Log Church at the mouth of Swago. For some years following the Civil War, the school alternated between the Log Church and



and the Dry Creek building. Later, when the increased population demanded, new buildings were erected at Dry Creek and Rush Run. At this time the Rush Run school is a standard two-room graded school, and boasts the best library contained by such a school in West Virginia. This was the first standard school in Pocahontas county and one of the first in the State. Well equipped and flourishing one-room schools are located Spruce Flat, Buck's Mountain, and Dry Creek.

The community has always been interested in education, and it is doubted whether any community of like size in West Virginia has sent more of its boys and girls to college, or given more of its citizens to public life.

The Industries.- The early settlers gave their time to agriculture, hunting, and trapping. None of these first settlers were wealthy. It is told that the total food supply brought by the pioneer Buckley family consisted of a bushel and a half of corn meal, and this scant store was made to feed the family for half a year. While land was being cleared and a crop raised, some means must be provided for the purchase of the supplies which were to be brought across the mountains from Staunton and Winchester. Clothing made of fur was in demand by the aristocracy of Europe, so the colonial merchants east of the mountains were glad to exchange salt, cloth, powder, and fire-arms for the pelts of bear, mink, and otter which the Swago pioneers were able to secure.

It is probable that the first mill was erected on Swago



about 1780 by Moses Moore. About 1795, Jonathan McNeill, who married Phoebe, a daughter of Moses Moore, acquired the mill site and erected a substantial mill which continued to serve the community until about 1890, when H.H. McClintic replaced it with the present "Red Mill." Jonathan McNeill also built a powder mill and at one time supplied powder to the settlers within the limits of the present counties of Randolph, Pocahontas, and Greenbrier. The sulphur required in the manufacture of the powder was brought by pack-horses from Staunton, while the saltpeter was obtained from the "saltpeter caves" near the head of Swago. Remains of the hoppers used in the manufacture of this saltpeter are still to be seen. One day ~~while~~<sup>when</sup> Jonathan was grinding powder, he left the mill running while he went to dinner. Some neighboring boys with a scientific bent sought to experiment by ~~by~~ placing some flints ~~into~~<sup>in</sup> the hopper. Shortly after the boys were gone, the flints went through the rollers and struck fire. The pioneers in the surrounding community were disturbed somewhat by a shower of locust logs, iron slugs, and sandstone boulders. When Jonathan returned, he found that the powder mill had gone away from the Swago community.

The present population is chiefly engaged in agriculture. The level lands are fertile and well adapted to the usual crops. The limestone hills provide an abundance of pasture.

The land was originally timbered with a splendid growth of oak, chestnut, maple, and black walnut. Maple sugar is still made by some farmers who have preserved their "sugar orchards." Great amounts of valuable timber has been destroyed in clearing and fencing the land.

At an early date an up-and-down sawmill was erected on Swago near the present residence of N.C. Rogers. Later, a number of small portable mills cut some small bodies of timber. About 1914 the largest area of timber in the community was purchased from the McClintic heirs by the American Column and Lumber Company. A large bandmill was erected on the Greenbrier and the logs were brought to the mill over a railroad built up Swago.

*Clinton  
Blasing.*

The first store was opened by A.L. McKeever in his dwelling at Buckeye. Later, John Wanless built a store on the old pike north of the creek. At present, A.W. McNeill has a store on the new State Road south of the creek.

Transportation.- The original "Warrior's Road," or Seneca Trail ran directly through the Swago section and may yet be followed without difficulty. This trail was the highway over which the first settlers came to the Swago country. This trail was widened in some places and its location changed in others so that it was made to serve as the main public road for half a century. In 1856, the Marlinton and Lewisburg Pike

was built through the community on a location almost parallel to the original Warrior's Road. For many years, all supplies were to be hauled over this road from the C&O station at Ronceverte. In 1900 the Greenbrier Division of the C&O was built through the community and a station known as Buckeye established on the east side of the river opposite the mouth of Swago. Just here it may be noted that the postoffice has never been known as Swago. The first office was known as Buckeye Cove because of the growth of buckeye trees in the valley near where the first office was established. This name has since been shortened to Buckeye.

Community Activities.— Though its first settlers came to the Swago community more than one hundred-fifty years ago, the neighborhood is not yet thickly settled. This may be accounted for by the fact that the pioneers were a home-loving breed, and it has been <sup>regarded</sup> ~~deemed~~ as indicative of shiftless ways if an acre of the original land were allowed to pass out of family control. Much of the land within the community is still owned by the descendants of the pioneers.

The schools and churches have always been the centers of community activities. The annual "Presidential Meeting" and basket-dinner at the Buckeye church was for twenty-five years a county, rather than a local event. Four-H Clubs have been maintained almost continuously since the plan was introduced



in West Virginia. An old-fashioned literary society, organized in 1882 in connection with the Dry Creek school was made a community affair and continued to hold its semi-monthly meetings until 1900. Community singing was conducted on a sort of circuit so arranged as to include every part of the community.

Swagoians in Public Life.- The Swago community has never included more than forty families, and for the first century after its settlement it did not comprise half that number. Notwithstanding its small population, the community has given a number of its native sons to public life. Among these may be mentioned the following:

Joshua Buckley, minister; Jonathan McNeill, county superintendent of schools; George W. McClintic, Federal Judge; L.M. McClintic, prosecuting attorney and member House of Delegates; A.L. McKeever, D.D., President W.Va. M.P. Conference; Otto D. McKeever, lecturer; N.C. McNeil, Member W.Va. State Senate; D.C. Adkison, clerk of circuit court; Douglas McNeill, prosecuting attorney, county superintendent, principal Edray District High School; J.E. Buckley, postmaster, Marlinton, West Virginia; George Duncan, county surveyor, Moore McNeill, minister, *John Kellison, noted athlete and coach*

Some Indian Reminiscences.- The first settlers had their share of difficulty with the Indians. From the standpoint of historic interest the killing of the Bridger Boys at Bridger Gap in 1786 deserves to be first mentioned. This was on the occasion of the Drinnen Raid when a war-party of <sup>*Iroquois*</sup> ~~Indians~~ swept down upon the Greenbrier Settlement from the north.

When the attack was made upon the Drinnen cabin, which stood near the Pocahontas County Fair-Ground, the alarm was spread among the settlers of the Swago community, and haste was made to reach the fort at Mill Point. When a party of the refugees had reached the top of the hill about a mile south of the present Buckeye post-office, it was decided that while the main party followed the road around the end of the mountain, a few scouts should take the Warrior's Road which led across the mountain. These scouts were the Bridger boys-John and Jim-and Nathan, a negro slave belonging to Drinnen. When the little party neared the "gap"-since known as Bridger's Notch-Nathan paused to tie his moccasin. As the Bridgers came into the "notch" they were fired upon from ambush. John was instantly killed. James ran southward down the mountain toward Mill Point, but was overtaken and shot at the foot of the mountain. Nathan escaped to join the main party at the Waddell Place where James Cook now lives. Next day the bodies of the Bridgers were brought to Mill Point and were buried on the knoll near where Lanty McNeill now resides.

While the Drinnen Raid was on, "Swago Bill" Ewing ventured out from the fort to see if all was well at his home, which was on lands now owned by W. McClintic. He reached the cabin safely and found that nothing had been disturbed. As he was leaving on his return to the fort, he passed the field where he had been plowing when the Indian alarm was spread. He thought it wise to remove his new plow to a place of safety, so he shouldered it and was carrying it to the woods. At the moment

he heard the rasping click of flintlock rifles. Turning, he saw three Indians lying behind a log. Their powder was damp and the guns had missed fire. Ewing dropped the plow and ran with the Indians in pursuit. The path followed by Ewing led by what is known as the Marony Place, near the head of Rush Run.

Where the trail crossed the Run, the ~~w~~wampy land was covered with willows and rushes. Ewing turned up the run, and so deceived the Indians who continued to follow the path. The large buckeye tree behind which Ewing hid was standing until a few years

ago. It may be interesting to note that this "Bravo Bull" Ewing afterwards went west and that one of his descendants was Adlai Ewing Stevenson, Vice President under Grover Cleveland from 1893 to 1897 -